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***Freedom Rider
Bill Bennett's Fantasy:
Freak in Life, Demon in Imagination
by Margaret Kimberley***

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Comedian Richard Pryor posed a question about how and whether America saw black people in its future. He noted that futuristic science fiction films rarely if ever had black characters. Was this absence a creative oversight or were we being given a hint?

Hollywood invariably presents the fantasies and desires of white Americans, particularly those of white men. If we pay attention, we notice that film producers aren't alone in revealing very telling yet frightening thoughts about black people.

William Bennett is the intellectual representative of the right wing. He served as Secretary of Education in the Reagan administration and as "drug czar" in the first Bush administration. After his days of government service he created a cottage industry of conservative tomes to scold and moralize to the rest of us. His best seller, *The Book of Virtues*, was followed by a plethora of books with the words virtues, values or morals in the titles.

Like Rush Limbaugh, drug addict, and Bill Cosby, serial groper, Bennett lectures and condemns while reserving the right to be a freak in his own life. In 2003 Bennett's gambling addiction became widely publicized. It was reported that he lost \$8 million in Las Vegas and Atlantic City in a ten year period. We are fortunate that what happened to Bennett in Vegas didn't stay in Vegas.

Like every other powerful conservative Bennett has his own radio show. A caller asked if social security would be on a safer financial footing if the fetuses aborted since *Roe v. Wade* had all been born and become tax payers. In his response Bennett proclaimed his pro-life, that is to say anti-abortion views. He then proceeded to say that the argument might be made that the abortion of all black fetuses would insure a lower crime rate. He then slickly added that such an action would be "immoral and reprehensible."



If Bennett really feels that aborting all black fetuses is immoral and reprehensible, the words would never have entered his mind. The comments were William Bennett's own Freudian slip that gave us a frightening peek at the secret desires of many white Americans.

Bennett clearly believes that black people are born criminals. His statement explains many things about his history. Bennett spent years warning about teenage "super predators" when the juvenile crime rate dropped. He continues to advocate for harsh sentences for drug crimes when rates of drug use have also dropped.

The black children that Bennett wants to do away with are committing much less crime than they did just a decade ago. According to U.S. Department of Justice statistics, the homicide rates for black juveniles, both as victims and offenders, fell by 71 percent from 1993 to 2003, the greatest decline among all racial groups.

Bennett has a Ph.D. and is a former college professor. Obviously he has no problem gaining access to the same data. The ugly truth is that he doesn't care about facts. The facts show that most of what Bennett has advocated is pure nonsense. Marijuana use is largely harmless, and a president who has oral sex in the oval office is a lot less dangerous and immoral than one who is either hitting the bottle or impaired by medication, as Bush seems to be.

If Dr. Bennett doesn't care about facts neither do the masses of white America. It is accepted that black people are born criminals, undeserving of rights from the moment of birth and inherently worthy only of living behind bars.

The Black Commentator – Freedom Rider: Bill Bennett's Fantasy

The firestorm that erupted after Bennett's comments followed a predictable pattern. Prominent people tried to outdo one another in berating him and Bennett kept putting his foot firmly in his mouth when he attempted to defend himself.

Bennett's wife, Elaine Bennett, has joined him in pushing the line that conservative so-called values are the only ones worth following. She runs an organization, Best Friends, that encourages teen sexual abstinence. After announcing that he had no intention of apologizing Bennett opined that Best Friends has helped more black teens than the entire black caucus. "She has done more for inner city black girls than the entire black caucus. So I will not bow my head to any of these people." The black caucus membership has seen better days, but they haven't sunk quite so low that the Bennetts and others who peddle discredited ideas about teen abstinence are doing a better job than they are.

In a perverse way Bennett has done us a favor. A brain hiccup from an enemy is always useful. It was useful that Pat Robertson called for the killing of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. He represents the views of Bush and his ilk and he told on them all when he spoke like a hit man.

Bennett is not alone in dreaming about dead black babies. Whether the thought is spoken aloud or not, the American fantasy is a world without any black people in it.

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